

TO TALK OR NOT TO TALK WITH THE NLF?

QUYET TIEN, January 15, 1969

Deputy Tran Ngoc Chau goes farther than all the other doves by saying that we must accept talks with NVN and the NLF and also accept the prospect of a coalition government with the NLF as a minority element.

With regard to the question as to whether or not to talk with the NLF, Deputy Tran Ngoc Chau, Secretary General of the Lower House, answered as follows:

- In the face of cruel realities in the political, economic, military and social fields we must accept talks with both the NVN government and the NLF to move toward restoration of peace and reunification of North and South.

These cruel realities demand that we make the following revisions:
Politically:

a. The most desperately anti-Communist Vietnamese must give up the illusion that the United States is the basic support for the struggle against the Communists.

b. They must admit the necessity of building up a support based on the masses (but not on a group of professional lackeys to the foreigners and the authorities) to replace control by the foreigners and to serve as the foundation for a new anti-Communist strategy.

c. They must accept a direct and total struggle with the Communists in South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and in the world which is different in form from that pursued up to now.

Economically:

a. The war must be ended, foreign investments must be encouraged, the US must be convinced to reduce its troops here so as to lessen its military expenditures and increase its aid to us, thus enabling Vietnam to settle its present economic situation which gets worse every day.

b. If the war drags on, and if the US and the allies do not give us more aid than before, our manpower situation would collapse. Then, even the best strategies and plans would become meaningless.

c. We must have plans and cadres to effect a transition from the present situation of economic dependence into a stronger economic situation before speaking of a self-sufficient economic base.

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Such a transition plan must be based on the curtailment of the US military expenditures as well as our own.

Militarily:

a. Our armed forces are able to stop the Communist occupation of South Vietnam by force of arms.

But our strategy in the past, as represented by the various forms of organization of the armed forces, mobilization, training and equipment will certainly not bring an end to the war for many years to come.

b. Our present strategy is continuing to bring destruction to the country and dependence on the foreigners while no victory is in sight different from the victories which have been publicized over the past ten years.

Socially:

a. The longer the war lasts, the more our society is divided and gradually divorced from the (good) qualities which are inherent in our people.

b. A society which is thus troubled and no longer self-confident will be easily attracted by the Communists.

QUESTION: Do the statements made by the Vice President, by some US personages, and by the Chairman of the Lower House imply that the Saigon government will talk with the NLF? Are the statements by the Vice President and the Lower House Chairman unconstitutional?

ANSWER: After those statements, I hope that the RVN will talk directly with NVN and the NLF.

Those statements are not unconstitutional because:

a. Until now, the NLF has never admitted that it is Communist.

b. NVN is an entity.

c. We cannot use the fact that there are a number of Communists in an organization to close the door and force all the other members of that organization to follow the Communists.

d. Although the NLF is dependent on NVN, it is a reality which exists in SVN.

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QUESTION: If we talk with the NLF, on what basis should we talk?

ANSWER: We must talk with the NLF on the basis of talks between a constitutional government and an armed political opposition organization which we cannot unilaterally destroy within a given period of time.

QUESTION: Does talking with the NLF mean it will lead to a coalition government? What is your opinion concerning a coalition government in this case?

ANSWER: We must accept such a prospect. In this case, the NLF can be accepted as a minority element.

QUESTION: With such a coalition government, do you think that the RVN can stand firm?

ANSWER: In the face of such a direct threat and challenge, non-Communist parties and factions must unite into a stronger, more active and more independent Nationalist Force.

This would put an end to a situation in which the US is depended upon as the basic support for the anti-Communist struggle, as is the case now. But we must discriminate between the need for independence and standing firm from opposition to the United States and other allies, in order to avoid falling into the Communist's trap.

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